



National Child Care Information Center

A service of the Child Care Bureau

NCCIC

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QUALITY RATING SYSTEMS: IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

Quality Rating Systems (QRS) are a method to assess, improve and communicate the level of quality in early care and education settings. QRS are systemic, addressing multiple aspects of early care and education through a uniform approach that is available throughout a State. QRS are part of a State's broader quality improvement continuum, and have the following five common elements: 1) standards; 2) accountability; 3) program and practitioner outreach and support; 4) financing incentives specifically linked to compliance with quality standards; and 5) parent education.

The following is a sample of implementation guidelines that can be used as a State is considering the options and issues in the development (or improvement) of a Quality Rating System. The implementation guidelines are not listed in order of priority, and some of the tasks will need to simultaneously occur in the planning stage. Additionally, some strategies can be considered when implementing the system (although may be re-examined as the system evolves), and others will be ongoing.

Early Planning/Design

1. Identify implementing agency/agencies.
 - a) Address staffing issues, staff training, and continuous support for the implementing agency staff.
2. Include a plan for evaluating the impact of the system on the quality of care and child outcomes from the beginning of system implementation.
3. The following forms are needed to implement a Quality Rating System:
 - a) Application;
 - b) Monitoring form; and
 - c) Other forms specific to the developed quality criteria.
4. Develop policies and procedures to include the appeals process for a child care facility. The policies and procedures should address the following:
 - a) Clear instructions on how applications are handled if incomplete when submitted;
 - b) If, and how, quality levels might be reduced if monitoring reveals that a program no longer meets criteria; and
 - c) Appeals procedures on disputed decisions.

5. Train the subsidy/eligibility agency staff on the Quality Rating System and its benefits for families. This staff is often the first contact families have when looking for financial assistance paying for child care. Staff in the subsidy office need to be trained, particularly those working with families and their applications, even if they are not the implementing staff for the Quality Rating System.
6. Develop and maintain a tracking system reflecting the participating number of facilities and children impacted.

Drafting Quality Levels or Steps

7. If education/training is part of your quality criteria, the following must be addressed:
 - a) A professional development system needs to be in place and providers must be made aware of it;
 - b) Educational/training entities need to be apprised of the effort and their potential involvement;
 - c) If the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential is part of the quality criteria, the Council for Professional Recognition needs to be apprised, and the State must have enough trained CDA advisors; and
 - d) Providers must be educated about the CDA, the Certified Childcare Professional (CCP), and other national and/or State early childhood credential requirements that will be included in the quality criteria.
8. Within the levels of quality criteria, establish definitive compliance guidelines for meeting the requirements within the components of designated quality levels. For example, establishing compliance with the components of the Learning Environment quality criteria. What are the components of this criteria that must be met at each designated quality level?
9. If accreditation will be part of the Quality Rating System, which accrediting organizations will be recognized? What tool will be used for evaluating the national accreditation organizations applying for recognition in the State's system? What will be the appeal process for the accrediting organizations?

Monitoring for Quality Criteria

10. If a classroom assessment will be part of the Quality Rating System, what instrument(s) will be used? If classroom assessments (Environment Rating Scales, *Arnett Measure of Teacher Sensitivity*, etc.) are part of the quality criteria, who will do the assessments? How often? Who will train the evaluators? How often will the evaluators be trained? Where will the evaluators be housed?
11. Will there be a system for monitoring a child care program's compliance with the Quality Rating System standards? For example, using a tool or form to monitor for compliance for the identified quality criteria, such as staff qualifications/training,

administrative policies and procedures, parent/family involvement, etc. If yes, who will monitor it? How often?

12. If licensing compliance will be one of your criteria, establish an acceptable licensing threshold (i.e., substantial compliance/good history with licensing).

Support for Programs and Practitioners

13. Inform and recruit the early childhood community to participate in the system.
14. Provide mentoring, and support early childhood providers in the application process and help them understand the Quality Rating System.
15. Establish a formalized link with the child care resource and referral (CCR&Rs) agencies.

Sustainability and Public Awareness

16. Develop a public relations campaign to supply brochures, public service announcements (PSAs), billboards, etc., to parents and the general public.
17. Provide awards and acknowledgements for providers such as certifications, signs, brochures, pins, etc.
18. Review, refine, and revise by listening to feedback from providers, implementing staff, parents, the public, etc.
19. Always remember your identified goals and keep focused!

Quality Rating System: Questions to Ask, *a companion document*, is available on the Web in HTML format at <http://nccic.org/pubs/tieredsystem.html>, and in PDF format at <http://nccic.org/pubs/tieredsystem.pdf>.

The National Child Care Information Center does not endorse any organization, publication, or resource.

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